

THE A-Z

GUIDE TO Writing HEADLINES FOR ONLINE CONTENT

As a content marketer, you win the battle for engagement by making your headlines irresistible.

So let's make our way through the alphabet and spell out 26 tactics bound to help you improve your headline writing chops.

ASK

Posing a question, one of the oldest tricks in the book, remains one of the best ways to engage a reader.



BENEFITS

Features tend to bore readers. Make an emotional appeal by putting benefits in your headline.



COLONS

A proven headline approach is to begin with a topical keyword phrase, followed by a colon—or dash—followed by a statement or question.



DO'S

AND

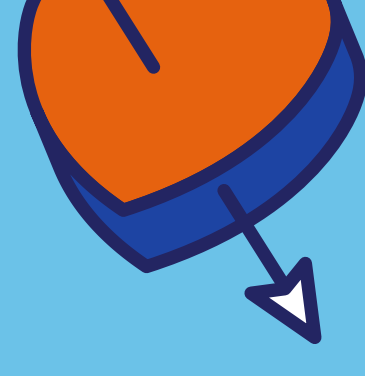
DONT'S

Write a "do or don't" headline to indicate your content is going to deliver a tactic or list that does or doesn't work for a task your audience needs to accomplish.



EMOTION

Decisions are based on emotions. Capitalize on the power of emotion by aiming for a feeling or describing one.



FACTS

In the world of non-fiction, we all hunger for facts. A well-timed, topical, or provocative fact (or list of them) can be the ultimate hook for your story.



GREATS

No matter what you're writing about there are "greats" you might attach your story to: great accomplishments, great leaders, great landmarks in time, etc.



HELP

Help is a universal foundation of content marketing, non-fiction, and so many forms of publishing.



INSPIRATION

Online content should be inspiring. It tends to guide you into new territory. A great headline may focus on the basic idea "you can do this."



JACK

Jack something, as in "steal" (or borrow). Writers often turn to "newsjacking" to borrow interest from a trending story or famous figure.



KEYWORDS

Identify keywords and phrases people use when searching and include them in your headlines.



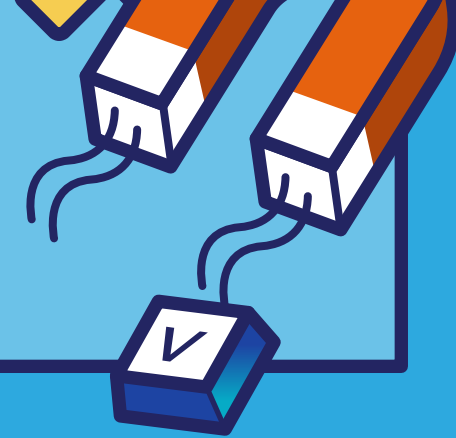
LISTS

Lists work. Readers instantly know what they're getting and appreciate how lists bring order to their lives.



MISTAKES

Mistakes, misconceptions, myths... Experienced pros embrace negative headlines because they have tremendous pulling power.



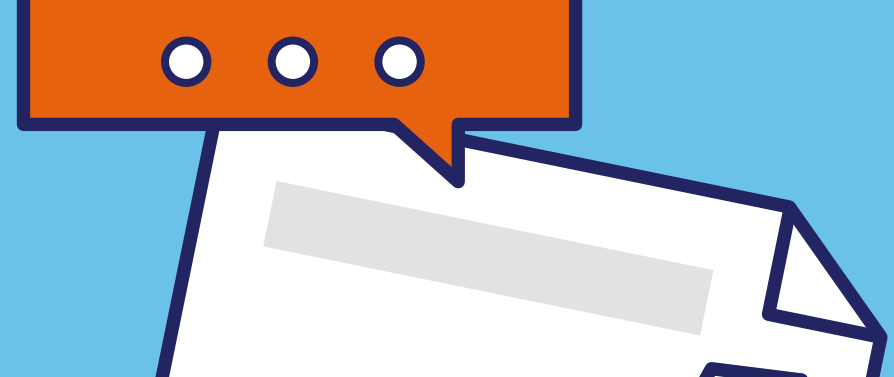
NUMBERS

Use a number in your headline. Add intrigue to your headlines by citing results, timeframes, measurements, or anything that can be enumerated.



OPINIONS

Write a headline that indicates you're going to express your opinion—or that of another expert—and you're likely to woo many writers.



POWER WORDS

Revisit your headline looking for soft or vague words that can be replaced with more powerful, energetic, emotional or descriptive words.



QUOTES

Pull a quote from a speech, interview, research report, song, movie or anything you believe makes for a tasty appetizer for the content soon to be served.



ROUNDUPS

Roundup articles generally present the insights of a number of experts or sources. Headlines for roundups almost write themselves. How many experts? What will they share?



STARTING

Getting started tends to be the hardest part of any task. Indicate your content presents the reader with an effective way to begin.



TEASERS

The "curiosity gap" is an age-old and proven headline technique. Simply write a headline that teases the reader into a state of "I must know where this is going."



USES

A derivative of the "How to" headline: write a headline revealing how X can produce Y.



VERBS

Could your headline start with a verb? Can you make the verb urgent and interesting? Inject action into your headlines with interesting verbs.



WHO

WHAT

WHEN

WHERE

WHY

Whether your headline is a question or a statement, these five "W" words can help you shape an interesting one.



eXAMPLES

eXamples can give you an exciting way to tee-up your content. Showcase a person, group, companies, accomplishments, or any type of relevant example.



YOU

Your headline isn't going to callout the reader by name, but the word "you" is the next best thing.



ZINGERS

A zinger is a quip or phrase that comes last. Add zing with a second sentence (or place a thought in parentheses).



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